

BEE GEES: PREPARED FOR THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

THE BIGGEST yawn ever must have been the Bee Gee arguments. Round one to Barry — round two to Robin. Robin going solo — sister Lesley brought into the group. Headlines splashed all over the national as well as musical papers. And what a bore — who cared if they hated one another? And when everything was so-called settled and they were on good terms again, still no one cared.

But the Bee Gees paid for their folly. Two records made after the rift was bridged failed to make the charts in Britain. The group deny that the failure of these two singles here had anything to do with their rows and the fact that the public over here had become disenchanted with them. Now everything is hunky dory — as their new single 'My World' is back in the charts.

ROBIN: This may be the first record we've had in the charts after the rows, but the other two records were both number one in America and in other countries as well. I fail to believe that people here are anti the group.

BARRY: Anyway, groups are splitting up like flies and coming together again in the same way. They seem to make a big deal about our argument, and a year and a half after we're back together again it still exists.

Why then do you think the records didn't take off over here?

BARRY: Because England was going through a phase which was against music like ours — an underground phase. But now the public has come back to us again.

For the past few years your music has remained very much the same — don't you think it's time you changed it?

BARRY: No, we should never change what we're doing. We



Robin Gibb

should do exactly what comes into our heads at the time. We've always been very dedicated to what we're doing. We don't believe in policy changes, or anything like that.

Have the changes in personnel slowed up the band at all?

BARRY: No, if anything they have speeded things up. We're still writing a lot and doing a lot of live gigs. The rows we had made us grow up — if nothing else we learned that we shouldn't argue again. At first it was difficult to go back because we were feeling each other out and seeing if we would still argue. But once that was sorted out then it fell back really nicely.

You say you've been doing live gigs — but not in this country for some time. Have you plans for a British tour?

BARRY: "We've been talking



BARRY GIBB: "England was going through a phase which was against us"

about doing a live show here for the past year. We don't want the money for it — we want to tour Britain without being paid. But at the same time it will cost us to tour. This is a situation involving the tax man. You get into a lot of serious trouble just by touring and wanting to be in front of the public. We want to do a tour but we'll have to pay to do it — that's the difference.

If it could possibly be arranged, when would be the soonest date you could do a live gig?

BARRY: Within the next six months — we wanted to do a live gig at the end of last year but we couldn't get the London Palladium and all those theatres because it was coming up for Christmas.

Why do you say Palladium — surely the Albert Hall or Rainbow would be more suitable.

BARRY: No. The acoustics at the Albert Hall aren't exactly right for us, or for what we are liable to do on stage. And what we are liable to do on stage will be very surprising — compared to our act the last time you might have seen us, two or three years ago. We play our hits of course, but we also include comedy.

Do you object being regarded as a teenybop band?

BARRY: I don't think we are regarded as one. We've just been nominated for a Grammy award and that's not teenybop. In America they think we're heavy. Britain still has a long way to catch up with what we're doing. Britain has been turning a blind eye to the Bee Gees — the Bee Gees haven't been lagging behind Britain.

But surely bands like T. Rex and Faces who do live gigs

here are bound to get acclaim and deserve it simply because they are going out playing to audiences. Isn't it unfair to say 'Britain is lagging behind the Bee Gees' if you don't play live gigs here?

BARRY: It's frustrating for us that we haven't played here for a while, as well as frustrating for the people who want to see us.

Do you ever go and see bands like, say, T. Rex and Faces?

BARRY: No — because we don't want to be influenced by them. If we go and see other acts we tend to be influenced. You get an idea for a song and you don't realise you have taken the idea from someone else.

ROBIN: "We're a very closed-up group. We firmly believe in what we are doing. To us, our music is the ultimate thing — we don't like outside influences and we don't believe we need them.

We never have and we've been doing this for 15 years. You can get enough influences just by reading the papers or watching television."

Are you aware that you are one of the few bands who still dress 'nicely' on stage. Who don't wear a T shirt and jeans — and thus put across an image of a rather 'goody, nice even sweet' band?

BARRY: "Nobody tells us how to dress — nobody dare. No-one ever has, and no one ever will. People pay to see you — they don't want to see you in jeans like they wear. They want to see something different. It's nice to present yourself well on stage — the audience immediately feels 'they've taken the time to dress up'."

ROBIN: We know it's unusual now to dress up — but we don't want to go out on stage with our arse hanging out.

And finally, how long can you see the Bee Gees going on as a band working live gigs. Will you ever become simply a recording band?

ROBIN: "No — we'll go on till we drop. We'll all do separate things but the Bee Gees will always be the Bee Gees. We're not just a group — we're an establishment within ourselves, and we're a family as well. The Bee Gees are more to us than our second name. We were almost born with the NME in one hand and a piano in the other. We were born into music and we'll go on the road even when we're 60."

Barry: "Maybe we are freaks, but we don't intend to do the same argument thing again. It was a mistake and we know it, and the two years we were apart is nothing to the 15 years we've been together. It was just a break for us and now we're back together again. It won't happen again — we won't let it happen. Once we see the danger signs we'll pull ourselves together."

JULIE WEBB